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# THE MENTOR

Makers of Modern  
American Poetry  
(Women)

By  
HOWARD W. COOK

DEPARTMENT OF  
LITERATURE

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# Modern Poetic Tendencies

WE are now in the midst of one of those tremendous spiritual upheavals when the thought of man, grown more powerful and introspective bursts forth in poetry. And the quality of that poetry is human, racy and vigorous; it is not only closer to the soil but nearer to the soul. Our poets have shaken themselves free, first of all from the pontifical rhetoric, the tag-end moralizing of our literary doctors and doctrinaires. And as they have rid themselves of the tradition of didacticism, they are growing clear of the tradition of routine romanticism. By that I do not mean that our poets are any the less genuinely romantic. They are more so. For they are getting their romance out of themselves and their lives (like Herrick and Villon and Heine) rather than out of books of cloudy and classical legendry. Their eyes do not fail to catch the glamor of the old tales, but they turn with creative desire to more recent and less shop-worn loveliness.

Poetry has swung back to actuality, to heartiness and lustiness. And, most of all, it has returned to democracy. Latterly the most exclusive and aristocratic of the arts, appreciated and fostered only by little *salons* and erudite groups, poetry has suddenly swung away from its self-imposed strictures and is expressing itself in the terms of democracy. This democracy is two-fold: a democracy of the spirit and a democracy of speech. Our poets are coming back to the oldest and most stirring tongue; they are using a language that is the language of the people. They have rediscovered the beauty, the dignity, I might almost say the divine core, of the casual and commonplace.

It was Whitman, more than any other single element, who broke the fetters of the present-day poet and opened the doors of America to him.

From "The New Era in American Poetry," by Louis Untermeyer.

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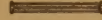


MARGARET WIDDEMER

# Makers of Modern American Poetry

(WOMEN)

By HOWARD WILLARD COOK  
*Author of "Our Poets of Today"*



## MENTOR GRAVURES

AMY LOWELL

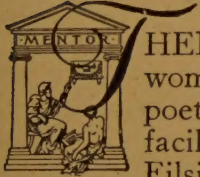
SARA TEASDALE

ALICE BROWN

EDITH M. THOMAS

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY



HERE has been much of rare, fine merit accomplished by the women writers of contemporary American poetry. Indeed, few poets of the male sex have achieved a greater audience than the facile and revolutionary Miss Lowell or the lyric-voiced Mrs. Filsinger (Sara Teasdale). There is a wide span of years between these poets and their sisters of the nineteenth century—represented by Julia Ward Howe, the Cary Sisters, Louise Chandler Moulton, Helen Hunt Jackson, Julia C. R. Dorr, Edna Dean Proctor and others—and there is also a wide divergence in spirit and form of expression between those that make our "New Poetry" and the singers of the past. It is the chief purpose of the present article to consider especially the women whose work is of this day, but in doing this, it is only just to pay tribute to the pioneer women who were the first to strike Apollo's lyre in America.

The name of Julia Ward Howe is immortal by virtue of her "Battle Hymn of the Republic"; while Phoebe Cary's spiritual muse lives in such lines as "One sweetly solemn thought comes to me o'er and o'er."

Marie White Lowell's "The Morning Glory," Elizabeth Stoddard's "Last Days," Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr's "Earth! Art Thou Not



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

Weary?" Rose Terry Cooke's "Lise," Elizabeth Clementine Kinney's "The Quakeress Bride," and Louise Chandler Moulton's "Hic Jacet," all live on today—fair examples of a period of poetry in which we find many compositions of lyric quality sometimes lavish with sentiment. A spirit links those former poetesses with some of the singers of today, though the latter offer a new order of verse, fresh and novel in theme and meter. We find the poetic spirit of yesterday and today linked in such utterances as those of the two extraordinary, youthful and short-lived geniuses—Anne Reeve Aldrich and Emily Dickinson. The following lines of Miss Aldrich's might have been written by one of our present-day poetesses.

Well, my heart, we have been happy;  
Let us snatch that from the wreck of things.  
But when the forest is choked with ashes,  
While still the flame round its old nest flashes,  
'Tis a brave bird sits on a charred limb and sings!

## Sara Teasdale and Margaret Widdemer

In the writings of our living American women poets are found the combined qualities of metrical and free verse,\* radical and conservative. To Sara Teasdale and Margaret Widdemer the Poetry Society prizes of 1918-1919 were awarded by Columbia University. As both of these poets find their complete means of expression in lyric form† it may be assumed that, after all, the old forms are best loved by the majority of poetry readers. The honor conferred upon Miss Widdemer came as the result of the publication of her book of verse, "The Old Road to Paradise," a fine, imaginative work, notable for literary values and heart quality.



RUTH McENERY STUART

For years a popular writer of poems of Southern life and character, full of tender sentiment and humor

Margaret Widdemer was born in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, and was educated at home. She is a novelist as well as a poet, her best known novels being "The Wishing-Ring Man" and "You're Only Young Once." A volume of published verse appeared under the title "Factories and Other Poems." She is now the wife of Robert Haven Schauffler, well known as the author of verse and prose.



Photo by Mary H. Northend

JULIA WARD HOWE

From a photograph taken at her summer home during the last year of her life

\*According to its generally accepted meaning, *vers libre* (vare leebr—free verse) is poetry written without regard to meter—combining truth, beauty and music in a free form of verse.

†Lyric verse is that form of poetry whose object is to give expression to personal thought and emotion; poetry of sentiment. It is graceful and rhythmic in meter and conforms to regular metric rules. Much lyric verse is set to music.



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

## A Teacher Poet

Katherine Lee Bates is another poet who finds the old form of verse to her liking, and has written her delightful nature poems as well as her more recent poems of war in a similar vein. Born in the little seafaring town of Falmouth, Mass., Miss Bates early began to revel in poetry reading. Later, in her sophomore year at Wellesley College, a poem she had written was accepted by the *Atlantic Monthly*.

"Ever since that time," says Miss Bates, "I have been looking forward to a period in my life when I shall be free to devote the best of my strength and the most of my time to poetry. That period has never come, as I have been all my years a very busy teacher, doing a good deal of incidental writing, studies on special subjects,—for example, American Literature and the English Religious Drama,—and editions of English Classics. But I am still expecting, and shall continue to expect until I reach the Amaranth Meadows, a holiday all of my own on Parnassus."

"A Song of Riches" is a charming example of Miss Bates' earlier verse.

What will you give to a barefoot lass,  
Morning with breath like wine?  
Wade, bare feet! In my wide morass  
Starry marigolds shine.

Alms, sweet Noon, for a barefoot lass,  
With her laughing looks aglow!  
Run, bare feet! In my fragrant grass  
Golden buttercups blow.

Gift, a gift for a barefoot lass,  
O twilight hour of dreams!  
Rest, bare feet, by my lake of glass,  
Where the mirrored sunset gleams.

Homeward the weary merchants pass,  
With the gold bedimmed by care.  
Little they wis that the barefoot lass  
Is the only millionaire.

One of the most important factors in contemporary American poetry is Harriet Monroe, who, as founder and editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, has done much toward fostering the spirit, so necessary in young poets, that thrives upon the sight of its own printed thought, expressed in verse.

Aside from her editorial duties, Miss Monroe counts to her credit, "Valeria and other Poems," "The Columbian Ode," "John Wellborn Root—a Memoir," "The Passing Show" and "You and I." Her "Love Song" runs:

I love my life, but not too well  
To give it to thee like a flower,  
So it may pleasure thee to dwell  
Deep in its perfume but an hour.  
I love my life, but not too well.

I love my life, but not too well  
To sing it note by note away,  
So to thy soul the song may tell  
The beauty of the desolate day.  
I love my life, but not too well.

I love my life, but not too well  
To cast it like a cloak on thine,  
Against the storms that sound and swell  
Between thy lonely heart and mine.  
I love my life, but not too well.

In 1917, together with Alice Corbin Henderson, Miss Monroe edited "The New Poetry, An Anthology," one of the most valuable books of its kind.



MARGARET WIDDEMER



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

Miss Monroe was born in Chicago. She was graduated from the Visitation Academy, Georgetown, D. C., in 1891, and was invited by the Committee on Ceremonies of the Chicago Exposition to write the dedicatory poem for its opening in 1893.

## Jessie B. Rittenhouse

For more than twenty years Jessie B. Rittenhouse has devoted her life to the criticism of modern poetry and to the various movements looking to the advancement of poetic appreciation in America.

As a pioneer in the poetry movement, Miss Rittenhouse published in 1904 "The Younger American Poets," a volume of criticism devoted to the work of the poets of twenty years ago. This book had to create its own field, as at that time, poetry was regarded—with a few exceptions—as "a drug on the market," and not a popular literary product. It not only made its field, but turned the first furrow for what has followed. It is in use at the Sorbonne (Paris), the University of Tokio, the college at The Hague, and other foreign institutions, as well as in most of our own colleges. Following its publication, Miss Rittenhouse came to New York and during the next ten years did most of the criticism of poetry for *The New York Times Review of Books*, and various other newspapers and periodicals, lectured in universities and before clubs on poetry, and, in the office of perpetual Secretary of the Poetry Society of America, hewed the way for our present-day poetic renaissance.

While Miss Rittenhouse has been so busily engaged in behalf of our American poets, her poetic muse has had little chance to express itself in creative work, but during 1917 and 1918 Miss Rittenhouse wrote the delightful verses that make up "The Door of Dreams."

Such stanzas as "The Hour" show the quality of Miss Rittenhouse's work:

You loved me for an hour  
Of all your careless days  
And then you went forgetting  
Down your old ways.

How could you know that Time would work  
A magic deed for me  
And fix that single hour  
For my eternity!

## "Sunbonnet" Verses

"My sunbonnet sort of verses, describing old-timey people and places, with as much of the charm such subjects always had for me as I could get into my pen, had for several years a fair sale in a number of well known magazines," says Sarah Cleghorn. Miss Cleghorn became interested in helping to right various social wrongs, and her accumulated indignation found expression through a very different sort of medium from her old-fashioned rhymes. She declares that she loves free verse no better than rhymed, but believes it more candid.



KATHARINE LEE BATES



HARRIET MONROE

Poetess and editor of the magazine,  
*Poetry*



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

Miss Cleghorn is of Scotch and New England parentage and has lived almost all of her life in the village of Manchester, Vermont, where she was born in 1885.

Anna Hempstead Branch was awarded the first of *The Century* prizes to be given college graduates in a "best poem" contest. This prize-winning poem, "The Road 'Twixt Heaven and Hell," gave Miss Branch a place of merit among American poets.

Miss Branch was born at New London, Connecticut. Her works include, "The Heart of the Road," "The Shoes that Danced," "Nimrod and Other Poems," and "Rose of the Wind."

Olive Tilford Dargan was awarded a \$500 prize by the Southern Society of New York for the best book by a Southern writer. She was born in Grayson County, Kentucky, and taught school in Arkansas, Mexico, Texas and Canada until her marriage. Next to writing poems and dramas, her chief interest lies in farming. She makes her home in Almond, N. C., where inspiration is furnished for many of her exquisite nature studies.



JESSIE RITTENHOUSE

William Stanley Braithwaite,\* some few years ago, gave prominent mention in his annual anthology to Eunice Tietjens, whose work in verse was then beginning to attract the attention of a discerning audience. Her first volume of verse, "Profiles from China," was published in 1917.

Mrs. Tietjens was born in Chicago in 1884. After having studied in Paris, Dresden and Geneva, she returned to the city of her birth, where she makes her home.

## Poetry of Optimism

Mrs. Florence Earle Coates makes us feel, much more than do many of her contemporaries, how suggestive are the things that lie beyond the printed page. So clearly indicative of her whole attitude as a poet is the "Song of Life," that we quote it intact:

Maiden of the laughing eyes,  
Primrose-kirtled, winged, free,  
Virgin daughter of the skies—  
Joy—whom gods and mortals prize,  
Share thy smiles with me!

Yet—lest I, unheeding, borrow  
Pleasure that today endears  
And benumbs the heart tomorrow—  
Turn not wholly from me, Sorrow!  
Let me share thy tears!

Give me of thy fullness, Life!  
Pulse and passion, power, breath,  
Vision pure, heroic strife—  
Give me of thy fullness, Life!  
Nor deny me death!

"The gentle spirit reflected in these lines runs through all of Mrs. Coates' work," writes an appreciative critic. Mrs. Coates is not only a cultivated poet, with marked skill in composition, but a sensitive soul vibrating to the finer chords of life. "Her songs," writes Henry Van Dyke, "are tuned with an exquisite cadence, touched with an appealing grace."

While the name of Amelia Josephine Burr has for many years been associated with the best in American poetry, it is in "The Silver Trumpet" that the old



SARAH CLEGHORN

\*Critic, author and poet.



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY



FLORENCE EARLE COATES

Revolutionary spirit of America finds birth once more in a new war verse of compelling merit. "Old feelings love old forms, and Miss Burr, never much prone to capering or simpering innovation, has spoken reverently and simply in the speech and intonation of the fathers," says *The Nation*.

Amelia Burr was born in New York in 1878 and received her education at Hunter College. She lives at Englewood, New Jersey. Among her publications are "The Point of Life and Plays in the Market-Place," "Life and Living," "A Dealer in Empires," "Afterglow," "The Roadside Fire," "In Deep Places." She also has edited "Sylvander and Clarinda," and "The Love Letters of Robert Burns and Agnes McLehose."

## *For Discriminating Poetry Lovers*

In the four published books of Lizette Woodworth Reese there is verse much beloved and admired by discriminating lovers of poetry. Born in Baltimore County, Maryland, in 1856, and educated in Baltimore, Miss Reese follows the profession of teaching, but has found opportunity for writing such fragrant poems as "Arraignment," and such a flawless sonnet as "Tears":

When I consider Life and its few years—  
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;  
A call to battle, and the battle done  
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;  
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;  
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;  
The burst of music down an unlistening street—

I wonder at the idleness of tears.  
Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight,  
Chieftains, and bards, and keepers of the sheep,  
By every cup of sorrow that you had,  
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright  
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep;  
Homer his sight, David his little lad!

There is a rare whimsical quality in the works of Edna St. Vincent Millay, whose "Renaissance," written at the age of nineteen, brought her name to the fore among contemporary poets. Witness these qualities in "The Penitent":

I had a little Sorrow,  
Born of a little Sin,  
I found a room all damp with gloom  
And shut us all within;  
And, "Little Sorrow, weep," said I,  
"And, Little Sin, pray God to die,  
And I upon the floor will lie  
And think how bad I've been!"

Alas for pious planning—  
It mattered not a whit!  
As far as gloom went in that room,  
The lamp might have been lit!  
My little Sorrow would not weep,  
My little Sin would go to sleep—  
To save my soul I could not keep  
My graceless mind on it!



THEODOSIA GARRISON

So up I got in anger  
And took a book I had,  
And put a ribbon on my hair  
To please a passing lad.  
And, "One thing there's no getting by—  
I've been a wicked girl," said I;  
"But if I can't be sorry, why,  
I might as well be glad!"

## *Aline Kilmer's Poetry*

The poetry of Joyce Kilmer, who gave his life in the World War, has been read and is being read throughout the world to-day. In a quiet little volume, "Candles That Burn," his widow "sings tenderly to the children that she now seems to love with an even keener devotion since their father, Sergeant Kilmer, was killed in France."

There is technic in Mrs. Kilmer's writing, and the danger of becoming oversentimental is never apparent in her verse. Rare sympathy is shown in "The Hall Bedroom":



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"In the long border on the right  
I shall plant larkspur first," she thinks.  
"Peonies and chrysanthemums  
And then sweet-scented maiden pinks.

"The border on the left shall hold  
Nothing but masses of white phlox.  
Forget-me-nots shall edge this one,  
The one across be edged with box.

"The sun-dial in the centre stands  
There morning-glories bright shall twine.  
And in the strip at either end  
Shall grow great clumps of columbine.

"There is no garden in the world  
So beautiful as mine," she dreams.  
Rising, she walks the little space  
To where her narrow window gleams.

She gazes through the dingy pane  
To where the street is noisy still,  
And tends with pitiable care  
A tulip on the window-sill.



LIZETTE WOODWORTH  
REESE

## *Corinne Roosevelt Robinson*

Admirers of Theodore Roosevelt will find a certain special interest in Corinne Roosevelt Robinson's book, "Service and Sacrifice," sonnets of fine quality that are "not mere lines written on the occasion of his death, but real poetry gushing from a bereaved heart." Mrs. Robinson gives us this story of her work:

"My early love of poetry was much encouraged by my father, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. He used to read a great deal with me, and was very fond of having me read to him, and I have now the little volume of the series called "Little Classics" which we took when we went on some long, lovely drive at Oyster Bay, when we lived there as children. We would picnic in some remote spot, and then bring out the little volume and read aloud to each other. When I was about ten or eleven, my parents were abroad, and I was in Dresden. I think my agony of home sickness was the cause of my first effort in rhyme, called 'The Lament of an American Child in a German Family.' Later, at the age of twelve or thirteen, a number of young girls and myself formed a club for which we wrote, and I think our efforts gave us facility—I always wrote verses for the club. I never thought of publishing till about 1910, when a friend who was reading a poem I had written, 'The Call of the Brotherhood,' asked me why I had never published. She finally persuaded me to send that poem, and a sonnet called 'Awakening' to Scribner's. I refused to affix my name, as I felt that, being the sister of ex-President Roosevelt, that might insensibly have some weight with a publisher, and I did not want my poems published at all unless on their own merit. They were both accepted, and later, as Mr. Scribner wanted the name of the author, I was willing to give it.

"The following summer Mr. Scribner asked me if I would like to collect my things, and have them published in book form. This I did and Scribner's published my first volume, 'The Call of Brotherhood,' in October, 1912, and the second volume, 'One Woman to Another,' in 1914, and now 'Service and Sacrifice' in 1919."

Mrs. Robinson's nature poems present a kind and sympathetic analysis; the last stanza from "The Path that Leads Nowhere" shows the tone of the entire poem:



AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

All the ways that lead to Somewhere  
Echo with the hurrying feet  
Of the struggling and the striving,  
But the way I find so sweet  
Bids me dream and bids me linger,  
Joy and Beauty are its goal,—  
On the path that leads to Nowhere  
I have sometimes found my soul!

A critic has declared Babette Deutsch's sonnets like cameos, intensive, clear cut pictures, as shown in the following poetic vision of two old men at chess:

The old heads nod;  
A parchment-colored hand  
Hovers above the intricate dim board.  
And patient schemes are woven, where they sit  
So still,  
And ravelled, and reknit with reverent skill.  
And when a point is scored  
A flickering jest  
Brightens their eyes, a solemn beard is raised  
A moment, and then sunk on the thin chest.

This little poem is from "Banners," Miss Deutsch's first book, which reveals in its pages much promise for the future of its author.



ALICE DUER MILLER  
Poetess and playwright, author  
of "Come Out of the Kitchen"  
and other plays

## *A Boston Poet*

Louise Imogen Guiney was born in Boston in 1861, the daughter of the late General Patrick Robert Guiney. Her works include the following titles: "Songs at the Start," "The White Sail," "A Roadside Harp," "The Martyr's Idol, and Shorter Poems."

In "Sanctuary" the characteristic charm of Miss Guiney's verse is found:

High above hate I dwell:  
O storms! farewell.  
Though at my sill your daggered thunders play,  
Lawless and loud to-morrow as to-day,  
To me they sound more small  
Than a young fay's footfall:  
Soft and far-sunken, forty fathoms low  
In Long Ago,  
And winnowed into silence on that wind  
Which takes wars like a dust, and leaves but love behind.  
Hither Felicity  
Doth climb to me,  
And bank me in with turf and marjoram  
Such as bees sip, or the new-weaned lamb;  
With golden barberry-wreath,  
And bluets thick beneath;  
One grosbeak, too, mid apple-buds a guest  
With bud red breast,  
Is singing, singing! All the hells that rage  
Float less than April fog below our hermitage.



ALINE KILMER

The first volume of poetry published by Helen Hay Whitney (1898) was "at once approved for its artistic perfection, impassioned lyrical expression, and suggestion of reserved dramatic force." Subsequent volumes, eight or nine in all, have confirmed this impression of her work. Mrs. Whitney, who makes her home on Long Island, N. Y., is a daughter of the late John Hay.

Ina Coolbrith, born in Illinois of New England parentage, but for many years a resident of California, has found time, in the midst of her busy life as a librarian, to do much



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

excellent literary work. Poems from her versatile pen have won just praise at home and abroad. One of the most prolific and popular women poets of today is Mrs. Theodosia Garrison Faulks, whose home is in Elizabeth, N. J. In the volumes entitled, "The Joy O' Life," "The Earth Cry," "The Dreamers," we hear at their clearest "the heartening, characteristic notes" of this gifted maker of verse.

Mary McNeil Fenollosa has painted with a poet's pen the color and imagery of Japan—a country in which she was long a resident. Her muse has best expression in such poems as "Full Moon Over Sunidagawa," "Exiled," "To a Japanese Night-ingle," and "Miyoko San."

Snare me the soul of a dragon-fly,  
The jeweled heart of a dew-tipped spray,  
A star's quick eye,  
Or the scarlet cry  
Of a lonely wing on a dawn-lit bay.  
Then add the gleam of a golden fan,  
And I will paint you Miyoko San.

## Mary Carolyn Davies

It was not until 1918 that Mary Carolyn Davies' first book, "The Drums in Our Street," was published, although the poetry of this talented woman had appeared in all the leading American magazines and anthologies. Of all the books of verse published during and at the conclusion of the World War, few finer thoughts found poetic expression than in these poems, of which, as one critic remarked, there is scarcely a line that has not a fresh beauty of expression as well as a touch of emotion.

One of her most appealing poems is this one, called "Peace":

When all the war is made and done,  
And in our town I stand once more,  
From other homes I'll seek out one  
And knock upon its door.

And I will wait there patiently  
Until I hear your step, and then  
As the worn door swings back, will see  
Your face look out again.

And that is all peace means to me—  
Some day to walk up past the store,  
And past the corner chestnut tree,  
And knock upon your door.

## A Group of Lyricists

Ruth Comfort Mitchell, Grace Fallow Norton, Grace Hazard Conkling, Angela Morgan,—all lyricists, are "in their frankness, their directness of expression, their use of a distinctly national idiom, definitely American singers, not tuneful echoes of melo-dists overseas." The author of "A New Era in American Verse" praises the essentially dramatic quality of Zoe Akins' work. Miss Akins, a successful writer of plays, is one of a group of American poets whose names are associated with literary accomplishments other than the writing of verse. Another of the group is Josephine Dodge Daskam, whose "Songs of Iseult Deserted" are called by Jessie Rittenhouse, "lyrics worthy of any hand."

Each new year of the twentieth century brings forward some new singer—some fresh voice to carry on in her own way the heritage of those that have gone before.



ZOE AKINS

Poetess and playwright, author of "De-classée" and other plays



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

## *The Imagist Poets*

No one is better qualified than Miss Amy Lowell to express the spirit of the group of modern poets known as "Imagists." The following paragraphs, containing a statement of the principles of the Imagist School, have been selected from Miss Amy Lowell's important and interesting critical work, "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry":

"I suppose few literary movements have been so little understood as Imagism. . . . To call a certain kind of writing 'a school,' and give it a name, is merely a convenient method of designating it, when we wish to speak of it. We have adopted the same method in regard to distinguishing persons. We say John Smith and James Brown, because it is simpler than to say: six feet tall, blue eyes, straight nose—or the reverse of these attributes. Imagist verse is verse which is written in conformity with certain tenets voluntarily adopted by the poets as being those by which they consider the best poetry to be produced. They may be right or they may be wrong, but this is their belief.

"Imagism, then, is a particular school, springing up within a larger, more comprehensive movement. This movement has as yet received no convenient designation. We, who are of it, naturally have not the proper perspective to see it in all its historic significance. But we can safely claim it to be a 'renaissance,' a re-birth of the spirit of truth and beauty. It means a rediscovery of beauty in our modern world, and the originality and honesty to affirm that beauty in whatever manner is native to the poet.

"The movement is yet in its infancy. Other poets will come, and, perchance, perfect where these have given the tools. Other writers, forgetting the stormy times in which this movement had its birth, will inherit in plenitude and calm that for which these have fought. Then our native flowers will bloom into a great garden, to be again conventionalized to a pleasance of stone statues and mathematical parterres, awaiting a new change which shall displace it. This is the perpetually recurring history of literature, and of the world."

## *Principles of Imagism*

Miss Lowell sets down the following list of tenets to which the Imagist poets have mutually agreed. As Miss Lowell states, this does not mean that the poets have pledged themselves to these principles as to a creed, but simply that they have all found themselves in accord with these simple rules:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. To create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods—and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry a new cadence means a new idea.



CORINNE ROOSEVELT ROBINSON  
Mrs. Douglas Robinson is the sister of  
Theodore Roosevelt



MARY CAROLYN DAVIES



MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

- 3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly of aeroplanes and automobiles, nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.
- 4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.
- 5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
- 6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is nothing new under the sun; even the word "renaissance" means a re-birth not a new birth, and of this the Imagists were well aware. Their short creed was preceded by the following paragraph:

"These principles are not new; they have fallen into desuetude. They are the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature."

It is not primarily on account of their forms, as is commonly supposed, that the Imagist poets represent a changed point of view; it is because of their reactions toward the world in which they live.

Professor Dowden, in an article on Heinrich Heine, says: "He swam with the current of romantic art, and he headed round and swam more vigorously against the current, so anticipating the movement of realism which was to meet and turn the tide; but Heine's ideal of art, at once realistic and romantic, is still unattained."

"At once realistic and romantic," this would seem to be the goal toward which the New Movement in Modern American Poetry is aiming.



OLIVE TILFORD DARGAN

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

OUR POETS OF TODAY - - - - -	By Howard Willard Cook
TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY - - - - -	By Amy Lowell
THE NEW ERA IN AMERICAN POETRY - - - - -	By Louis Untermeyer
AMERICAN POETRY - - - - -	By Percy H. Boynton
PRESENT-DAY AMERICAN POETRY - - - - -	By Harry H. Peckham
THE NEW POETRY, AN ANTHOLOGY - - - - -	By Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson
AN AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY - - - - -	By Edmund Clarence Stedman
ANTHOLOGIES OF MAGAZINE VERSE - - - - -	By William Stanley Braithwaite

\* \* Information concerning the above books may be had on application to the Editor of The Mentor.



# T H E O P E N L E T T E R

The present generation is witnessing a renaissance of verse. We are told that the poetry of the day is much read and discussed. If that is true, it is well, for many years have elapsed since poetry—with a few notable exceptions—held a prominent place in the public heart, and in the publisher's catalogue. At the close of the last century a few larks rose to the sky, and a few nightingales sang in the trees, but they sang, apparently, because it was natural for them to sing, and because the sky and trees invited their souls—and not with thoughts of royalties, for publishers found little profit in verse, at least in lyric verse. One of the most prolific of the American poets of thirty years ago observed, at that time, to a publishing friend, "We writers of lyric verse are nothing but space-fillers for you. Our best songs simply serve to make the pages of your magazine come out even." During those years much good poetry was written, but many a strain of purest lyric beauty "wasted its sweetness on the desert air," and the names of many true poets were known only to the lovers of verse. And now, today, the air is so vocal with song birds that it taxes the critical ornithologist to collect and classify them. Publishers tell us that poetry pays. This may be regarded as a hopeful sign of better literary times; but, wait—let us consider the matter further.

★ ★ ★

We hear much of "new forms" of verse, and we are told that there is a "new spirit" in the poetry of the day. But what significance have the words "new" and "old" in poetry? What is the time value of verse? Is a sonnet sweeter that is fresh from the poet's pen than one that has sung its way through the years into many thousand hearts? Is a poem more wonderful because it has a new-fangled meter? Are we to follow fashion in verse as we do in dress, and mould our emotions, as we cut our clothes, according to the latest models? Is it true that there is really a great hunger, today, for good poetry—an eager outreach for a fuller understanding of the truths that only poetic intuition can unveil; or, are many simply taking up poetry as a novel diversion, and assuming an interest in new

verse as they do in the new dances? Do they read the new poetry because they understand it and love it, or simply that they may talk about "the latest thing in verse"? There is a good deal in the making of some of our modern poetry, and in the attitude of some readers of it, that makes us wonder whether the best interests of literature are being served by either poet or reader. For that reason it is an important duty for a publication like *The Mentor* to select for consideration the work of a number of the best women poets of the present day. We are not concerned with poetry as a fashion of the hour. The fame of the singers that we celebrate in this number of *The Mentor* rests not on the fact that their songs are new, or "the latest thing," but that their flight is exalted, and that their strains are fresh and sweet—in brief, that their verses give us what we always look for in poetry, a tonic for the soul. If poetry be not this, let it be ever so clever in meter, ever so "modern" in spirit and thought, it is dead sea fruit for us. Let special literary cults cry "lol here" and "lol there" over certain modern, feverish poetical products. We know that there is no salt in them for our souls.

★ ★ ★

I'd rather understand a bit of poetry than be puzzled by it; I'd rather be uplifted than depressed by it; I'd rather find a natural joy in lyric beauty than force myself to accept a wilful, wayward meter; I'd rather open my heart to a sincere, eloquent message from a sensitive soul than struggle through vague verses for truths that the writers do not seem to have fully grasped themselves; I'd rather find joy in the radiance of pure poetry than brood in the shadows of metrical vagaries.

★ ★ ★

Let us dwell on the examples of modern verse that we have given here, and ask ourselves whether the beauty that they unfold is a thing of time. These modern women poets of ours—these and many others like them, just budding under the warmth of inspiration—fill our hearts with hope, for they have written, not for today nor tomorrow, but for the eternal truth as they see it.

*W.D. Moffat*  
EDITOR







**M**ISS AMY LOWELL is regarded as the chief American propagandist of the poetry called *vers libre*. It was with the publication of her first book, "A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass," that there was born the forerunner of American free verse, after which many maddening verse makers were to fashion even madder verses.

When these stanzas were written "imagism" was an unheard of word and *vers libre* had yet to become a factor of dispute between the orthodox and the new school of poets.

Since that time Miss Lowell has become one of the important figures in poetry-making of today, with her twofold vocation of poet and critic. While she has willingly, or otherwise, obtained for herself a super-radical sort of reputation, her work fulfils the fundamentals or ideals laid down for poetry in its true sense.

Amy Lowell was born in Brookline, Mass., on February 9, 1874, and was educated in the private schools of her native state.

No biographical presentation of her would be complete without including the statement that her genealogical tree presents the names of James Russell Lowell, the poet, who was a cousin of Miss Lowell's grandfather, and her brothers, the late Professor Percival Lowell, a scientific writer of note, and President Lawrence Lowell, of Harvard University.

Miss Lowell lived abroad for many years after the completion of her school life, but it was not until 1902, upon her return to the family homestead in Brookline, that she began to study seriously the craftsmanship of poetry. Then followed eight years of preparation, described by Richard Hunt as "a solitary and faithful apprenticeship, reading the masters, learning the technic of poetry, and developing her genius by constant exercise. It was a discouraging struggle, for she was her only critic, but to this fact is undoubtedly due much of her individuality and excellence." Miss Lowell's first published poem appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Although at the age of thirteen years Miss Lowell displayed some ability at verse-making, she spent most of her time in out-of-door sports, caring for the animals upon her father's great flower-covered estates and reading from the large collection of books that filled the family library. Mr. Hunt, in his biographical resumé of Miss Lowell, expresses this childhood influence of gardens and flowers upon her as follows:

"There have been many kinds of nature poets, but none exactly like Miss Lowell. She is the poet of that nature which is the product of landscape gardening and architecture. As we go through her pages we find ourselves in old secluded gardens where fountains play into cool basins, paths wind among statues and flowering

shrubbery, and marble steps lead to shady garden seats. Her poems are sweet-scented with narcissus."

In "Patterns" Miss Lowell is perhaps at her best—certainly no other poem better illustrates the perfect beauty of her writing, the vigor of her inspiration, and a genius that finds in so-called free verse an almost complete form of expression. This same feeling is shown in "Postlude" from her somewhat lengthy prose poem "Guns as Keys: and the Great Gate Swings":

In the Castle moat, lotus flowers are blooming,  
They shine with the light of an early moon  
Brightening above the Castle towers.  
They shine in the dark circles of their unreflecting leaves.  
Pale blossoms,  
Pale towers,  
Pale moon,  
Deserted ancient moat  
About an ancient stronghold,  
Your bowmen are departed,  
Your strong walls are silent,  
Their only echo  
A croaking of frogs.  
Frogs croaking at the moon  
In the ancient moat  
Of an ancient, crumbling Castle.

Miss Lowell's books include, among others, "Sword Blades and Poppy Seed," "Men, Women and Ghosts," "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry," "Can Grande's Castle," and "Pictures of the Floating World."

In England Miss Lowell has also gained a large audience. Miss Winifred Bryher, a London critic, pays tribute to her as "an explorer . . . offering of her own vision to unobservant eyes the breaking of innumerable barriers."

This English writer in commenting upon Miss Lowell's artistic progress says: "Development is ever of essential interest to me, but it is seldom growth in a writer's mind—outlook, can be traced in such detail and astounding measure, as in Miss Lowell's books. . . . But though the fibers are visible from which imagism is to blossom, definite touch of it is absent, or hovers a line or two, fearful of alighting. This was in 1912. In 1914 the first 'Anthologie des Imagistes' was printed, in which Miss Lowell is poorly represented by a single cadence, as idiomatic of her speech as anything she has written, and the earliest poem (according to accessible dates) of that region, so instinct with dreamed reality it is more vivid than an actual world,—Miss Lowell's own province, in which we are admitted to the daily company of loveliness, through the magic of her phrase. With 'Sword Blades and Poppy Seed,' published two months later, we are in the full maturity of imagist expression."





# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY—WOMEN

Sara Teasdale

TWO

**F**OR the first time in its history, Columbia University, in the Spring of 1918, awarded a prize of \$500 for a book of poetry. Sara Teasdale received the prize for her volume of "Love Songs" published in the fall of 1917. These poems have won for their creator an exalted place among American poets. The direct antithesis in poetic

meter from the work of Amy Lowell, Miss Teasdale's poetry has furnished much food for critical discussion not alone in the United States, but in France, Spain, Denmark, and various other foreign countries where the clear lyric beauty of her poems has been voiced by numerous translators.

Although herself a worker in the standard poetic medium, Miss Teasdale voices a catholic feeling when she declares that "so far as the respective merits of free verse and melodic rhymed verses go, it seems to me that the question is wholly one of the individuality of the poet and of the nature of his subject."

In "Love Songs," says *The New York Times*, "Sara Teasdale's best and most characteristic work is presented. Her lyrics will far outlast this period and become part of that legacy of pure song which one age leaves to another." In one of these poems, "Barter," is found the following testimony to the critic's comments:

Life has loveliness to sell,  
All beautiful and splendid things,  
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,  
Soaring fire that aways and sings,  
And children's faces looking up  
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,  
Music like a curve of gold,  
Scent of pine trees in the rain,  
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,  
And for your spirit's still delight,  
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,  
Buy it and never count the cost;  
For one white singing hour of peace  
Count many a year of strife well lost,  
And for a breath of ecstasy  
Give all you have been, or could be.

Sara Teasdale was born in St. Louis, August 8, 1884, and was educated in private schools in her home city. In 1903 she was graduated from Hosmer Hall and soon after left her St. Louis home for

Southern Europe and Egypt. Greece and Italy furnished inspiration for many of her earlier poems. In 1907 her first book, "Sonnets to Duse," was published. On its appearance a copy fell into the hands of Arthur Symons, the famous English critic and poet, who praised the unconscious technic of her writing. Her first poem to achieve wide recognition was a monologue, done in blank verse, "Guinevere," which appeared in *Reedy's Mirror*. Other monologues in the same style followed, each offering a fresh aspect of some famous woman in history or art, including "Beatrice" and "Helen of Troy." The latter, after being published in *Scribner's Magazine*, became the title of her second volume of poems, published in 1911.

To Miss Teasdale's second journey abroad we are indebted for such songs as "Off Capri"; and "Night Song at Amalfi":

I asked the heaven of stars  
What I should give my love—  
It answered me with silence,  
Silence above.

I asked the darkened sea  
Down where the fishers go—  
It answered me with silence,  
Silence below.

There is something in the work of Sara Teasdale akin to the "Grenstone Poems" of Witter Bynner, and it is of interest to read this tribute by Mr. Bynner to his gifted contemporary:

O there were lights and laughter  
And the motions to and fro  
Of people as they enter  
And people as they go. . . .

O there were many voices  
Vying at the feast,  
But mostly I remember  
Yours—who spoke the least.

Miss Teasdale was married in December, 1914, to Mr. E. B. Filsinger, and now makes her home in New York.





EDITH M. THOMAS

REPRODUCED FROM A WOOD ENGRAVING



# MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY—WOMEN

Edith M. Thomas

## THREE

**T**HE literary career of Miss Thomas bridges over the gap between the women poets of the 19th century and those of the present day. She was a well-known and much admired writer of verse back in the 80's and 90's, and she still holds her place in public favor. Scarcely a month or week goes by without the appearance of

some new verse from her pen; and there is no sign of waning spirit in her work.

It was the interest of Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson that acted as the spur to the imaginative genius of Edith Matilda Thomas and stimulated her development in literary work. She was born at Chatham, Ohio, on August 12, 1854, and was educated at the Geneva, Ohio, Normal Institute. She had written only a few things for publication when, in 1881, she met Mrs. Jackson, who, a poet herself, showed a cordial interest in the young poet's work, and encouraged her to seek a larger audience by sending her verse to the public press. Combining strength of expression with delicacy and spirituality of feeling, Miss Thomas found immediate favor with lovers of poetry—and this favor she has held through the years. No one who reads her verse need be told that the poetry of Keats was early in her heart and hand. She found also a rich fountain of inspiration in the works of the masters, Spenser, Milton and Chapman. Her delight in Chapman's translation of Homer was as great as that she found in Spenser's "Fairie Queene." These classics she read with an exultation of pleasure that caused an uncle of hers once to say, with some irritation: "You talk as if no one had ever found Homer before yourself." Above the literary influences that were active in the young soul of Miss Thomas, however, the chief inspiration was the love of nature, which is so clearly and exquisitely expressed in her poetry. She refers to it in a sonnet addressed to her mother, which stands as the dedication to her second volume, "Lyrics and Sonnets" (1887), and to the delight she found in an old garden that the hand of her mother had created. She was in a world of wonders there, and the flowers, the trees, the sky, the clouds, the glittering flow of the river, beside which the garden stood, were her discoveries and every-day treasures. As a girl, she was encouraged in this love of nature by her mother, who relates that she would have no breakfast until she had made the round of the garden, and examined its newest growths.

Miss Thomas' earliest verses saw light in country newspapers. It was not long, however, before she made her bow to metro-

politan audiences in some stanzas that were printed in the columns of the old *New York Graphic*. Then followed poems published in the *Century Magazine*. The meeting with Mrs. Jackson meant much to Miss Thomas, for, through that influence, she obtained a foothold in prominent periodicals somewhat sooner than she might otherwise have done. She soon found a large public cordially receptive to her work. And critics, too, were, from the beginning, warmly appreciative. Richard Henry Stoddard, the well-known poet, and a critic of distinction, wrote years ago: "The poetry of Miss Thomas, like the poetry of Keats, is nothing if not poetical. It is characterized by a sense of spiritual loveliness, a sense of inborn melody, and a sense of pensive sweetness. It lives, moves, and has its being in the Beautiful—now in suggested description, now in hinted emotion, and at all times in whatever is most womanly in woman."

Miss Thomas now has a home in New York City.

In her poem, "The Betrayal of the Rose," is portrayed an exquisite poetry picture which shows, in full measure, the talents of Miss Thomas:

A white rose had a sorrow—  
And a strange sorrow!  
For her sisters they had none,  
As they all sat around her  
Each on her feudal throne.  
A strange sorrow  
For one with no to-morrow,  
No yesterday, to call her own,  
But only to-day.

A white rose had a sorrow—  
And a sweet sorrow!  
She had locked it in her breast  
Save that one outer petal,  
Less guarded than the rest  
(Oh, fond sorrow!)  
From the red rose did borrow  
Blushes, and the truth confessed  
In the red rose's way!

Her poems have been gathered in volumes from time to time, the most notable of which are the following: "A New Year's Mask," "Lyrics and Sonnets," "The Inverted Torch," "Fair Shadow Land," "In Sunshine Land," "In the Young World," "A Winter Swallow, and other Verse," "The Dancers," "Cassia and Other Verse," "The Children of Christmas," "The Guest at the Gate," "The White Messenger," and "The Flower from the Ashes."





**T**HE name of Alice Brown stands high in American letters. She has written poetry, plays and short stories, and her work deserves to be ranked with the best and most significant American poetry and prose of recent years. Miss Brown lives, and always has lived, a very simple, quiet, normal life, caring little for public-

ity, and devoting herself exclusively to her work and her friends. She has seldom allowed herself to be interviewed, always discouraging the attempts of newspaper paragraphers to draw her into correspondence concerning her life and affairs. For that reason little is printed about her in the public press.

Miss Brown was born at Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, on December 5, 1857, and spent the early years of her life on a farm. These and a few other facts are all that we find in books of reference. Not long ago a special request was made by her publishers for fuller information concerning herself and her work, with the following interesting letter as a result: "I have been too busy in legitimate ways—gardening, cooking—to write you a human document. But these are some of the dark facts. I was born in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, about six miles inland from the sea, near enough to get a tang of salt and a 'sea turn' of walking. The country there is slightly rolling, with hills enough to give nice little dips and climbs in the winding roads, and the farms are fertile. My people were farmers. We lived, not at Hampton Falls village, but in a little 'neighborhood' on the road to Exeter, and at Exeter all the shopping was done. It was one post office, and any neighbor who drove over brought back the mail for the rest.

"I went to the little district school until I was perhaps fourteen, and then went to the 'Robinson Female Seminary,' Exeter, walking back and forth every day, except in the winter months, and there I was graduated—after which I taught several years, in the country and in Boston, hating it more and more every minute, and then threw over my certainty to write.

"I did a little work on the *Christian Register* and then went to the *Youth's Companion*, where, for years, I ground out stuff from the latest books and magazines.

"And that's really all! I own a farm here at Hill, which I don't carry on—sell the grass standing and the apples on the trees. I love gardens and houses. I wish I could go round planning the resurrection of old houses, and pass them over to somebody else, and then plan more.

"And that's all! Now I ask you if any one, even with a genius for embroidery, could make anything of that 'Story?' God bless you, sir, I've none to tell!"

It was not long after Miss Brown devoted herself to writing as a profession that she made her genius felt not only in New England but throughout the entire country. With simple words she sets down such gems of verse as "Revelation":

Down in the meadow, sprent with dew,  
I saw the Very God  
Look from a flower's limpid blue,  
Child of a starveling sod.

And these lines from her poem "Pan":

Both children of the sun,  
Loved of the wind,  
And understood by all four-footed kind.  
Ah! who but one reed-piping in the wood might  
now  
Sing of the god himself, his music-haunted brow  
His cheeks, like autumn hillocks, overspread  
With bloom of russet red.  
Richer than wine spilled o'er young maple tips  
His glowing lips  
For generous laughter curved; the all-compelling  
eye  
Where buried sunlit sands discovered lie—

But hush! ah, hush! lay listening ear  
To earth! Dost thou not hear  
His rhythmic tread? The gladdened air  
Drips with the wood-scent from his tossing hair;  
The very cloud  
Trails lower; and the oriole's loud  
Bright plaint is piercing, unsubdued,  
The lattice of her leaf-wrought solitude;  
The robin blither sings,  
The blindworm dreams of wings,  
Lower! bow low! above thy trivial state, O man!  
He comes, the earth-god, Pan.

The wilding clematis  
Roved o'er his regnant front with rioting kiss;  
The plummy goldenrod;  
There learned to nod,  
Entreating she might touch his tangled hair,  
And so transmute herself to fairest fair;  
Great lilies lusted o'er the living crown;  
And trailing down  
His mighty sides, the dull hop-vine  
Did with her dreaming mates entwine.  
Upon one shaggy knee  
He handled tenderly  
A youngling fox, whose mother stood thereby,  
Watching with worshipful and drowsy eye  
The laughing god and laughing little one,

Miss Brown makes her home in a quiet, old-fashioned house in a quiet, old-fashioned street in Boston. Her poems are published in a volume entitled "The Road to Castaly."





JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY

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## MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY—WOMEN

### Josephine Preston Peabody

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#### FIVE

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**O**NE of the most successful poetry plays published is Josephine Preston Peabody's "The Piper." It has reached its 21st edition, beginning its career by winning the Stratford Prize in 1910, and has been translated into many languages. Its popularity was confined not alone to book pages. It has met with equal success on the

stage in the United States, England, and other countries.

Poetess of the old order, Miss Peabody feels that there is not so much a new movement in poetry today as "an eddy, related to movement, or progress, as a side eddy is related to the main current of a river." And it is to the old form that Miss Peabody turns in those truly beautiful lines that fill her volumes.

Her writings include "Old Greek Folk-Stories," "The Wayfarers," "Fortune and Men's Eyes," "Marlowe," "The Singing Leaves," "Pan, a Choric Idyl," "The Wings," "The Book of the Little Past," "The Piper," "The Singing Man," "The Wolf of Gubbio," and "Harvest Moon."

Miss Peabody's "A Song of Solomon" was selected by Miss Monroe for "The New Poetry, An Anthology":

King Solomon was the wisest man  
Of all that have been kings,  
He built an House unto the Lord;  
And he sang of creeping things.

Of creeping things, of things that fly  
Or swim within the seas;  
Of the little weed along the wall,  
And of the cedar-trees.

And happier he, without mistake,  
Than all men since alive,  
God's house he built; and he did make  
A thousand songs and five.

In "Wood-Song" Miss Peabody is found in her finest lyric sense:

Love must be a fearsome thing  
That can bind a maid  
Glad of life as leaves in spring,  
Swift and unafraid.

I could find a heart to sing  
Death and darkness, praise or blame;  
But before that name,  
Heedfully, oh, heedfully,  
Do I lock my breast; •  
I am as silent as a tree,  
Guardful of the nest.

Ah, my passing Woodlander,  
Heard you any note  
Would you find a leaf astir  
From a wilding throat?

Surely, all the paths defer  
Unto such a gentle quest.  
Would you take the nest?  
Follow where the sun-motes are!  
Truly 'tis a sorrow  
I must bid you fare so far;  
Speed you, and good-morrow!

Josephine Preston Peabody was born in New York. She was married to Lionel Simcon Marks in June, 1906. Her home is at Cambridge, Mass. She was an instructor in English Literature at Wellesley College from 1901-1903.





## MAKERS OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY—WOMEN

*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

SIX

**T**IME was when the name of Ella Wheeler Wilcox, signed to a poem, gave a host of curious readers an expectant thrill. She began her literary life with a sensation; she closed it in a vein of lofty poetic song. Her "Poems of Passion," published years ago, set thousands of people talking. This was when Mrs. Wilcox was

a young girl, and her venture into bold flights of poesy brought upon her a storm of criticism. At that time the young writer would not have been granted a place in the elect choir of American women poets, but much water has run under the bridge since the publication of Mrs. Wilcox's "Poems of Passion," and, during the years, she has written verse that gives her rank among the poets of today. Judged simply by the extent of her public, she was almost unique in the field of modern American verse. With a wide newspaper popularity early in her career, she became, in the course of years, a favorite contributor to magazines that reached audiences of millions. Among these readers were many that knew little of poetry, and it was Mrs. Wilcox's distinction among women poets that she reached this vast body, touched its heart, and occasionally stirred it with inspiring strains.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox was born in Johnston Center, Wisconsin, in 1855, and was educated at the University of Wisconsin. She began to write poetry while a young girl, and her first verses appeared in newspapers. In 1884 she married Robert M. Wilcox, a merchant of New York, and, for many years, she made her residence in that city. At the time of her death, in 1919, her home was "The Bungalow," Short Beach, Connecticut. She spent a number of months traveling among American army camps in France, giving "readings" before enthusiastic audiences of soldiers. The work was arduous and contributed to the collapse that resulted in her death.

During many years, verses flowed freely—almost too easily, some said—from Mrs.

Wilcox's pen. She enjoyed popularity not only in the United States but in England. Her poems were gathered and published in volumes at different times—more than twenty in number. Some years ago, that final sign-token of popular approval—a Wilcox "Birthday Book"—was issued, containing a selection of her poems.

Mrs. Wilcox's work calls for special consideration in any review of American women poets because she was a distinctive type of writer, who did a kind of work that was peculiarly individual, and who reached an enormous public with her messages. For true poetic quality we look chiefly to the work of her later life. Her last book, "Sonnets of Sorrow and Triumph," shows her at her best. Edward N. Teall, writing in *The New York Sun*, says: "The 'sonnet sequence' in good hands is very high art, and, less capably managed, it can get pretty low. Ella Wheeler Wilcox's 'Sonnets of Sorrow' attain a lofty level—the paradox is harmless—in plumbing the depths of a heart's desire."

In this book the author gave eloquent expression to real, vital things. Critical readers have, for years, noted—and sometimes with severity—certain sentimental defects characteristic of Mrs. Wilcox's verse. She often assumed, in verse, the forlorn, heart-torn pose, and she, too frequently, flashed the showy phrase that caught the mind of the many, but "made the judicious grieve." But, in her later work—and especially in the "Sonnets of Sorrow and Triumph"—she rose to a higher plane, and her lines display truly noble feeling and fine poetic phraseology.



# THOSE I DO NOT KNOW

"Every man's imagination has its friends."—*Emerson.*

Friendship has smiled on me. I have proud store  
And varied wealth of love the years have heaped;  
And I should be content, not seeking more,  
Like a late gleaner in a field long reaped.

Sometimes in my small room, still and alone,  
I rove my thoughts around the world—here—there—  
Where'er are any whom my love has known,  
And who for me have more than idle care.

Then, windows seem to open into space,  
And my light thought slips through with dreaming ease  
And has its glimpse of each beloved face,  
And what the passing moment's task, it sees.

'Tis not enough, this visionary quest—  
This tender spying on known friends afar,  
Who do not heed they have me for a guest;  
But other visitings for Fancy are!

Yes, sometimes, in the quiet of this room—  
The world shut out—a whole world comes to me,  
A garden place of souls that richly bloom,  
Where I to choose some rarest flowers am free.

I little understand it, but my thought  
To those imagined ones outreaches so;  
I seem their ways and features to have caught—  
I have such love for *those I do not know!*

They whom I never saw, and may not see—  
I am bereaved of them, as though, once mine,  
A jealous Fate had stolen them from me,  
And loss I never had makes me repine!

Who are these friends, unmet in Time, unknown?  
Are they the friends of That which friends my soul?  
And do our ways a common centre own,  
Whereof their cloudless eyes pierce to the goal?

Then they and I must some time surely greet—  
We who on earth no common language had,  
And change good mornings on some heavenly street . . .  
And I and they shall be exceeding glad!

EDITH M. THOMAS.



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